

plaguing our communities

infiltrating our society

attacking our lives

destroying our families

gambling: it's **our** **problem,** New Zealand



Te Ope Whakāora

The Salvation Army Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling www.oasiscentre.org.nz

Gambling goes beyond the simple push of a button, the scratch of a ticket or the placing of a bet.
It ravages our society one coin, one ticket, one wager at a time.

When Gambling Becomes a Problem

Many people view gambling as a form of entertainment, but it can result in significant harm for the gambler and those close to them. **Gambling becomes a problem when it disrupts and damages someone's life, impacting friendships, family relationships, work life and the community they live in.**

Countries around the world are becoming concerned about the effects of gambling on people's household expenditure and of associated gambling-related harm such as increased crime and health problems, family break-up, addiction problems and increased debt.

In New Zealand, the Gambling Act 2003 recognises that gambling is a significant public health issue. The Act lists the preventing and minimising of harm caused by gambling as one of its purposes.

The Salvation Army believes gambling should be seen as a social hazard, not a harmless leisure pursuit.

Mike*, a client of The Salvation Army Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling, says gambling got in the way of his family, his financial growth and even his emotional wellbeing.

I'd tried to give up gambling several times, and each time I went back to it. I was desperate for some help. It got to the point where I had a lot of debt and was unable to provide for my family. Any time I got money in, I would feed it straight to the machines. I hated them and hated what I was doing, and realised that if I was to get back to a normal life, I had to give it up.

My family was badly affected. My wife was working 50 hours a week trying to pay the bills and make ends meet, and while she was out doing that, I was wasting money on pokies.

Alan*, another client, had always enjoyed gambling.

A TAB bet on the horses, cards with friends or going to the races. There was a fun social aspect to all these activities. But over a period of time the fun went out of gambling for me ... financial problems both in the personal and business area of my life resulted. Soon I was going backwards despite efforts to keep my head above water.

Alan's gambling led him to access funds that weren't his, and every day he feared being found out. Eventually the Police caught up with him.

Sitting in a cell, Alan realised he'd hit rock bottom.

Every opportunity I had been given—the support offered, relationships and love, business, house, self-respect—all were gone. Not in a moment, but over a period of time. What a waste!

'Over a period of time the fun went out of gambling for me. Soon I was going backwards despite efforts to keep my head above water.'

the **social harm** of problem gambling

A Growing Industry

The Gambling Act 2003 defines gambling as: 'paying or staking consideration, directly or indirectly, on the outcome of something, seeking to win money when the outcome depends wholly or partly on chance'.

Gambling is a growing industry in New Zealand with more and more gambling opportunities available in our communities since the 1990s: casinos, electronic gaming machines (pokies) in pubs and clubs, TAB outlets offering sports betting, new lottery products (Keno and Powerball), and the development of online gambling, including NZ Lotteries' online Lotto and TAB online access. This growth has been followed by a parallel increase in the number of people seeking help for problem gambling.

In recent years, gambling-related harm has emerged worldwide as a significant social and health issue. In New Zealand gambling is an emerging public health issue with concerning social, health and economic implications.

The 1999 National Problem Gambling Prevalence Survey estimated that about 1.3% (at least 36,800 adults) of the adult population had gambling problems of varying severity. This is considered a conservative figure.

In the year to June 1997 New Zealanders lost almost one billion dollars a

year through gambling. Ten years on, the nation is gambling away just over two billion dollars annually.

Despite some recent slowing in gambling growth with the introduction of the Gambling Act 2003, local government gaming policies and a ban on smoking inside gambling venues, gambling revenues continue to grow.

According to the Department of Internal Affairs, gambling expenditure increased in the 2006/07 year for the first time in three years (by 2.2%, from \$1.977 billion to \$2.020 billion). This was due to increased spending on non-casino gaming machines, racing and sports betting, and Lotteries Commission products.

Compared with the 2005/06 year:

- **Non-casino gaming machine expenditure increased by 5.0%**, from \$906 million to \$950 million. This reverses the decline in expenditure of 0.8% in 2004/05 and 11.8% in 2005/06.
- **Expenditure on racing and sports betting increased by 4.2%**, from \$258 million to \$269 million. This continues the recent

growth in racing and sports betting of 3.4% in 2005 and 4.5% in 2006. This is the highest figure ever for racing and sports betting.

- **Expenditure on Lotteries Commission products increased by 3.0%**, from \$321 million to \$331 million. This is a reduced level of growth compared to the previous year, which saw a 14.6% increase following the introduction of Big Wednesday.
- **Casino gambling expenditure (which includes casino gaming machines) decreased by 4.7%**, from \$493 million to \$469 million. This reverses the 4.4% increase from the previous year.

There are many forms of gambling, but some present more hazards than others, particularly the continuous-play forms such as electronic gaming machines. The primary gambling mode for those seeking help in 2006 was non-casino pokies in pubs and clubs, followed by casino pokies, casino tables, track betting, and then sport betting and Lotto/scratch cards/Keno.

In the year to June 1997 New Zealanders lost almost one billion dollars a year through gambling. Ten years on, the nation is gambling away just over two billion dollars annually.

Pokies continue to be the most harmful form of gambling in New Zealand with a greater concentration of pokies in poorer communities.

As gambling opportunities and revenues rise, so do the number of people seeking help for problem gambling.

Gambling's Harmful Effects

A 2000 Australian Productivity Commission study estimated that every problem gambler adversely affects the lives of seven other people. *Is it really worth the risk?*

Gambling harm, or problem gambling, is defined by the Gambling Act 2003 as 'harm or distress of any kind arising from, or caused or exacerbated by, a person's gambling, and includes personal, social or economic harm suffered by the person, their spouse, partner, family, whanau and wider community, or in their workplace or society at large'.

Problem gambling affects people's finances, health, relationships, children, employment and communities.

Other harmful effects of problem gambling include:

- Relationship breakdowns between spouses, children, friends and whanau
- Poor parenting, child neglect and

even family violence

- Stress, depression or suicide
- Work problems including fraud, loss of employment and trouble finding a new job
- Loss of home, possessions and security
- Substance abuse and crime

The Poorest Pay the Highest Price

As gambling revenues rise, those living in high-deprivation communities are at the greatest risk of social harm, particularly Maori and Pacific people who have high rates of problem gambling.

In 2006, approximately a third of all new clients seeking help for problem gambling were Maori, while Pacific new gambling clients increased to over 10% for the first time at Gambling Helpline Ltd.

A Ministry of Health study entitled 'Problem Gambling Geography of New Zealand 2005', shows that gambling venues are more likely to be located in more socio-economically deprived areas with 53% of all non-casino gambling machines located in deciles 8-10 in both March 2003 and June 2005.

The study notes that if non-casino gambling machines were distributed evenly with population throughout New Zealand only 30% would be in deciles 8-10. Over five times as many non-casino gambling machines are in the two

most deprived deciles (deciles 9 and 10) than in the two least deprived deciles (deciles 1 and 2). This distribution has not changed considerably since 2003.

TABs are also more likely to be in areas of higher deprivation with about half of all TABs in the three most deprived deciles (deciles 8-10). The distribution of TABs, in relation to socio-economic deprivation, is very similar to that of non-casino gaming machines, according to the Ministry of Health study.

The 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey shows that a higher proportion of those living in more deprived areas experience gambling problems. Socio-economic deprivation and ethnicity are also closely linked with Maori and Pacific peoples more likely to live in more deprived areas. This survey identified that gambling problems were experienced by 3.3% of Maori and 3.8% of Pacific peoples compared with 0.8% for Europeans/others.

Those affected by problem gambling typically struggle to afford healthy food, heating, accommodation, transport and health care. Salvation Army Food Bank research in 2004 found that approximately 12-14% of people accessing Salvation Army social services were identified as problem gamblers and 32% had been affected by another person's gambling. Many of these clients (approximately three-quarters) had children in their household and 78% were either Maori or Pacific.

But the impact on the community reaches further than just individual gamblers and their families. Problem gambling imposes costs on the local community through social, health and justice services, as well as through increased crime and productivity losses to businesses. Also, money spent on gambling is taken away from local businesses and activities.

Salvation Army Refuses Gambling Funds

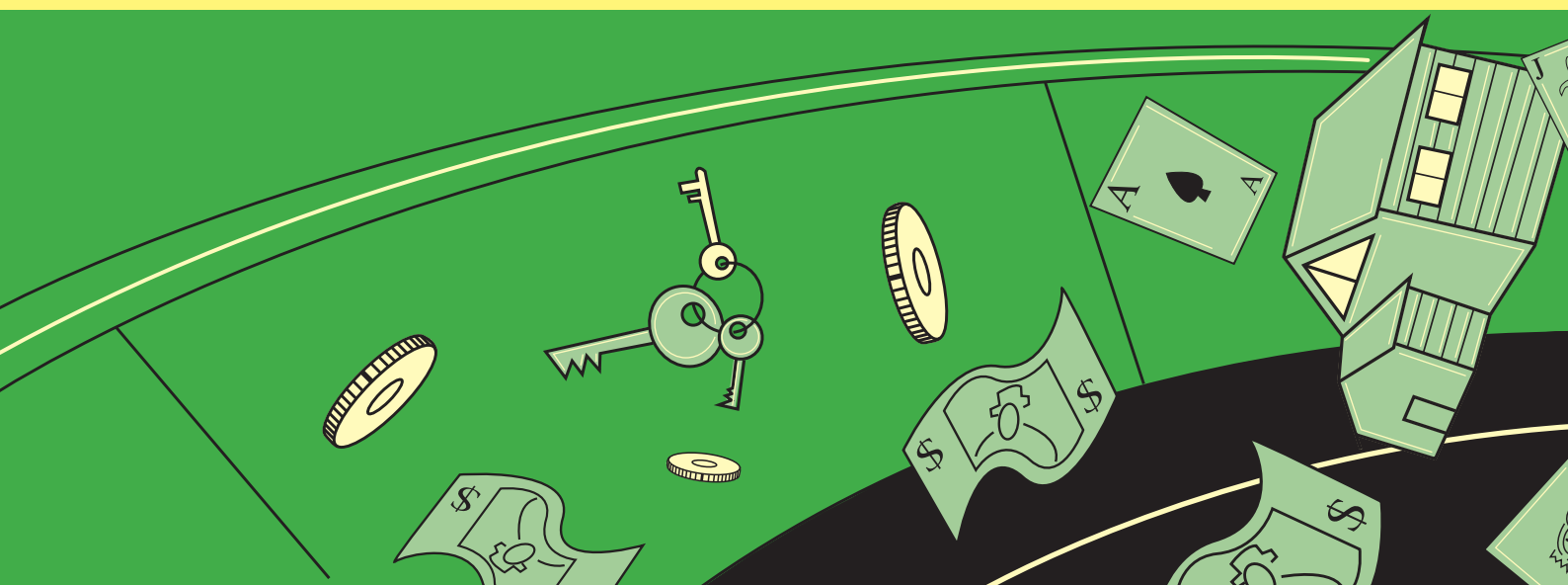
Though gambling is presented as a way to raise money for local communities, money spent in pokie machines does not always return to the community it came from.

Major grant recipients include sports (mainly racing and rugby) instead of community health or welfare agencies. Gambling prevails in poorer communities, yet often these areas are left under-resourced while other community sectors benefit from money raised through people's gambling addictions.

In 2008 The Salvation Army in New Zealand took an ethical and moral stance that it would no longer seek or receive funding directly derived from gaming profits. This was effective from 1 July.

The policy change recognises that the social cost of gambling is being

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paid by those who can least afford it. It affirms The Salvation Army's strong commitment to working alongside problem gamblers and to alleviating poverty and social disadvantage.

The Salvation Army does not want its name to be used to help legitimise gambling; neither does it want to be dependent on funds directly derived from gambling. Consequently, The Salvation Army will no longer seek or receive monies directly from the gaming industry to help fund its wide-ranging community services.

Beware the Pokie Machine!

Problem gambling is most often associated with gaming machines. Unlike table gambling, sports and track betting, these create an asocial gambling environment that preys on an individual's sense of chance and luck. People play to win with no limits ... until all their money is gone.

Pokie machines have moved from a one-coin game with handles and reels to machines with alluring flashing lights and sounds, ready to receive banknotes. These machines are designed to draw people to them, keep them playing and feed their hope for the 'big win'—whether they can afford to stay at the machine or not.

Sarah,* a client of The Salvation Army Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling, describes herself as a 'pokie machine addict'.

It started as a pleasure, became a habit, then an obsession and finally a full-blown addiction.

My longest stint was 18 hours in one go and \$1500 in one machine—in one episode. It got to the stage where, because I'd put so much money in, I thought I must get something out soon.

People will tell you they've just won \$1000, but they don't tell you they lost \$3000. You only hear about the wins.

The truth is: Pokie machines were not created to help players make money. Nor does how often they are played influence when and how much money players could win.

The Department of Internal Affairs says that it doesn't matter if:

- You play a machine directly after someone else had a big win
- You play a machine that has not had a big payout for a long time
- You play certain days in the week
- You play certain times during the day or night
- You press buttons a certain way

It is the machine that decides if you win or lose—and the odds are that you will lose.

Because of increased concerns at the significant social harm caused by pokies and to create safer communities, many New Zealand councils are adopting 'sinking lid' policies. If an existing gambling venue closes, it isn't replaced, and the number of pokie machines decreases through attrition.

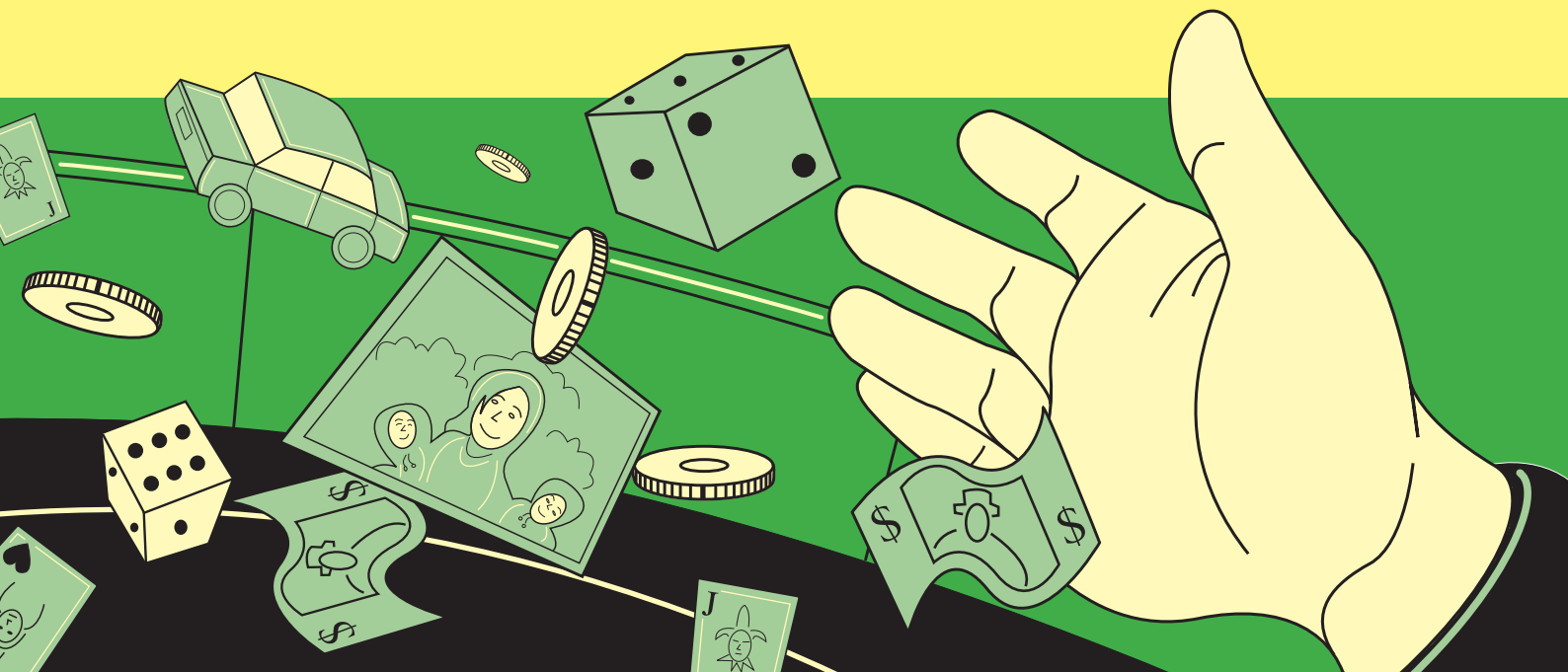
It's Our Problem, New Zealand!

Though problem gambling increases and continues to affect thousands of New Zealanders every day, you can ensure that gambling does not become a problem for those around you.

To prevent gambling from controlling your community:

- **Inform the community of various helping services**—including The Salvation Army Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling, the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand, the Gambling Helpline and other local agencies, including ethnic-specific services.
- **Improve community awareness and education**—inform your community of risks and harms associated with gambling, and debate and discuss this issue. You can ask Salvation Army Oasis Centre staff to give presentations on problem gambling.
- **Increase the knowledge and skills of health workers and community agencies**—by distributing gambling information such as brochures and other information so community workers can recognise the harm caused by gambling products and problem gambling and seek to minimise it.
- **Volunteer at local gambling community action groups**—visit www.pgfnz.co.nz to find a group near you, or start your own action group.
- **Prepare submissions for your local council gaming policy review**—lobby for sinking lid policies so machines and venues decrease over time.
- **Use resources from Gambling Watch (www.gamblingwatch.org.nz)**—monitor local venues in your community regarding their venue compliance with gaming regulations.
- **Stay informed and raise the voice of consumers**—Check out 'Focus on Gambling' (FoG), a radio show about problem gambling by consumers. The show airs in Canterbury on Plains FM 96.9 weekly at 11am and can be heard outside of Canterbury at www.plainsfm.org.nz.
- **Look for alternative methods of funding your community organisation**—rather than through gambling monies.

'People will tell you they've just won \$1000, but they don't tell you they lost \$3000.'



gambling and God

We can find examples of gambling games and events in most cultures. Risking assets or money with the hope of increasing returns based on 'luck' is experienced by many people as a fun activity—from the chocolate wheel at the school fair to a day out at the races. The harm caused by excessive gambling is not as well known as that caused by alcohol or drug abuse, mainly because it is so much harder to see.

The 'Evil' of Gambling vs the Providence of God

Historically, parts of the Protestant church—including The Salvation Army—have warned against the 'evil' of gambling, often associated with excessive use of alcohol and social harm in lower-income families where the breadwinner gambled household funds. This was not based on any biblical injunction specific to gambling, but was to promote temperance and upright citizenship, urging people to avoid the temptation of sins like greed, envy, deceit and idolatry.

Community Effects and Christian Involvement

Those who are church members (senior soldiers) in The Salvation Army promise to have nothing to do with the 'social evil' of gambling 'in whatever form it appears'. This is partly because gambling operates on an un-Christian basis of belief in luck (the Christian Church encourages reliance on the providence of God), and also because The Salvation Army knows that the harm caused by problem gambling goes much wider than an individual or even their families.

Gambling plays on people's desires for instant gratification and to become 'winners'. But it is in direct conflict with community responsibility towards the poor, which is echoed many times in the Bible and is of essential interest to the Christian Church: *'He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God' (Proverbs 14:31); 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, to preach good news to the poor.'* (Luke 4:18)

Public perception of 'private religion' may allow the Church a say in what church members do or don't do in relation to gambling, but when churches speak publicly about issues such as gambling, labels like 'wowser' (those whose overdeveloped sense of morality drives them to deprive others of their pleasures) tend to emerge. In New Zealand memory, such accusations are typically associated with the Temperance Movement of the late 19th century. But this debate continues today over social issues such as gambling.

Church groups were among those who opposed the introduction of Casino licensing to New Zealand. Association with organised crime one of the main fears, perhaps above thoughts of dependency of individuals or even communities on gambling. But it soon emerged that the growing number of non-casino gambling machines was a more immediate concern, due to both the number of venues available and the number of machines in those venues.

Increased gambling opportunities in New Zealand have paralleled increased demand for problem gambling counselling services, and the responsibilities of those providing commercial gambling opportunities have been brought into question. Unequal geographical distribution of gambling opportunities—with a proliferation in poorer areas (as with liquor outlets)—raises concern that profits are taken from those who can least afford it and who are most vulnerable to a seeming source of hope, albeit false, in depressed circumstances.

Salvation Army Mission

In The Salvation Army—with our stated three-fold mission of caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society by challenging injustice and evil—we have the opportunity and responsibility to act out our faith individually and as members of communities.

The frontline work of our Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling, and crisis response of our Community Ministries Centres, is **caring** for those most immediately affected by gambling, some of whom are desperate—even suicidal.

Transformation of lives begins with education and support and continues with the healing that comes through faith as people move towards God.

Reforming society is the aim of our Oasis Centres when making submissions to local bodies and Government for legislative change to control gaming outlets in opposition to liberalisation of gaming machine licensing. We also participate in 'Host Responsibility' education of local body representatives and gaming providers.

The Salvation Army's decision to refuse funds from gaming trusts is in line with our other 'reforming society' activities and is a way to stand in solidarity with those affected by problem gambling: *'Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (James 2:5)*

Salvationists strive for a faith that is 'accompanied by action' and are committed to living out such faith in their attitude and response to problem gambling in New Zealand: *'What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'* (James 2:14-17)

Bible quotations from the New International Version

'He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.' (Proverbs 14:31)

Leigh-Ann, an Oasis Centre case worker, says their service offers clients a safe and supportive environment where they can get the help they need.

One thing that I've learned is that no one size fits all. Part of our working philosophy is to support people wherever they are in their lives, either in groups or one-to-one.

Alan* became an Oasis Centre client and says a couple of one-on-one counselling appointments quickly pinpointed the reasons for his problem gambling behaviour. Later, weekly group sessions provided a forum to discuss issues in an understanding and non-judgemental environment.

Other group members offered insight from their experiences, and I was very aware of no longer feeling alone.

Mike* says The Salvation Army has helped him deal effectively with his gambling and keep his life under control.

It was hard for me to approach The Salvation Army. I was in a distraught state when I arrived, but was received very well and made to feel comfortable.

I'm now to the stage where I feel that I can trust myself again with money and not go gambling. I know it will take a long time for my family and friends to fully trust me again, but there's a huge improvement in my life.

The Salvation Army will be there for you—they make it a lot easier because it's probably not something you can do on your own.

'Part of our working philosophy is to **support people wherever they are in their lives**, either in groups or one-to-one.'

If gambling is a problem, **The Salvation Army** is here to help

Don't let yourself become just another statistic. Problem gambling can begin with something as simple as spending \$10 a week trying your luck on the pokies or buying a \$5 'instant scratchie' from the nearest dairy.

You may have a gambling problem if you:

- Spend more time gambling than you mean to
- Gamble with more money than you can afford
- Gamble as a way of escaping problems
- Lie to family, whanau or friends to hide your gambling
- Gamble to try to win back past losses
- Steal or think about stealing to get gambling money

The Salvation Army Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling empower people with gambling and related problems to make positive choices for a healthy lifestyle. The centres deal expertly with the needs of problem gamblers and those affected—family, partners or friends.

Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling provide information and education, confidential counselling, comprehensive assessment and referrals (if required) to specialist services including legal and budgeting advice and crisis intervention—all free of charge.



For More Information Contact: The Salvation Army Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling

www.oasiscentre.org.nz

Published by: The Salvation Army Addiction Services, Oasis Centres for Problem Gambling
New Zealand, Fiji & Tonga Territory (August 2008)

www.salvationarmy.org.nz

